The Night My Number Came Up

By AIR MARSHAL SIR VICTOR GODDARD

Have you ever had a premonition of disaster that came true? Here is an unimpeachable account, by a distinguished Briton, of such a case—where an ignored warning resulted in twelve hours of horror for ten men and a woman. This is his eye-witness testimony.

TONI FRISSELL

Air Marshal Sir Victor Goddard commanded the Royal New Zealand Air Force in 1942 and 1943.

MY FAVORITE TRUE STORY

This is a favorite true adventure story of mine. Naturally it would be, for I play the part of hero—or villain, as you please. It is one of the stories which I can be persuaded to tell by candlelight or fireside glow when kindness and romance touch hands, when history and memory conspire to please.

Each of my surviving companions has his own story; none can swear to the "whole truth and nothing but the truth"; none but I knew the secret as we passed through the valley of the shadow. I had knowledge which I strove to discount, but upon which, ultimately, I had to act—not to save *my* life, for that was doomed—but to save the lives of the others. Approach to scheduled death was my preoccupation.

In deference to the traditions of British crown service I have, with permission, changed certain names. For the rest, let me—like the Bellman in Lewis Carroll's The Hunting of the Snark—aver: ". . . I've said it thrice, and what I say three times must be true!"

—*The Author.*

GENERAL MacARTHUR saw the Far Eastern campaign of World War II through from start to finish. Not many can say that for themselves. I happen to be one who shared that distinction. Modesty compels me to admit that this fact is of importance only to me. It was, indeed, my reason and justification for dropping in at Tokyo; I was going to pay my respects to MacArthur on my way home.

The war was over. My time was up. I had begun my war against Japan in earnest when, in November, 1941, Admiral Kimmel, surrounded by his admirals in his office in Pearl Harbor, led me into a discussion of air power and sea power in the Pacific. That visit was an incident of my Pacific and Far East outward journey; I was meeting future Allied commanders before taking up command myself of the Royal New Zealand Air Force. Two years later, with the Guadalcanal turning point past and the Solomon Islands campaign virtually ended, New Zealand was again secure, and I found myself in New Delhi at the birth of Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten's South East Asia Command. After yet two more years of toil, administering British Air Forces for the reconquest of Burma and Malaya, I was at the point where this story begins—Singapore, January, 1946.

Admiral Mountbatten had the knack of making happy occasions. "Victor," he said one day after a conference, "I hear you are leaving us in a day or two. I'd like to give a little farewell party for you. Will you come and dine tomorrow night?"

As we dined the next evening in a cool upper room of Government House, I told Lord Louis of my plan to fly back home by way of Japan, Pearl Harbor and Washington.

"But why go all that way round?" he asked.

"Well, I came by way of the Pacific at the start of it all, and that's how I want to go back. Besides, I want to see how things are with our people up at the far end of the chain in Japan. And I want to say, 'Thank you and farewell' to Americans who helped me in the South Pacific and here."

"That seems a good idea," said the admiral. "You'd better have Sister Ann for the first part—as far as Hong Kong."

"That would be marvelous! Then I could get our Australia-Japan service to carry me on to Tokyo."

"How will you go on from Japan?"

"Admiral Towers is about to hand over his command at Yokohama. If I can get there by the twentieth he'll fly me on."

So it was fixed. Sister Ann, equipped with modern comforts, was well found as an airplane—sweet-natured, bright, and beloved. I was lucky.

On January fifteenth we watched Singapore, with all its hopes and sorrows, fade into the horizon of past experience. On our arrival at Hong Kong I was prepared to say good-by to Sister Ann and her crew, and wave them on their way back to Singapore. But there on Kai Tak Beach, at the end of the runway, lay the plane that was to have flown me on to Japan. She was a complete wreck. I radioed Lord Louis for permission to take Sister Ann on to Tokyo, and received an affirmative reply early the next day.

Three days after our departure from Singapore we were in Shanghai, where we stayed overnight.

The romance of exploration by air—taking off from the known for the unknown—has always appealed to me. Since 1915 I have been a professional aviator, and, though I have experienced disaster by air, or come seemingly near to it, in all the continents of the globe, I am not given to premonitions or to nervous anticipation of mishap. My outlook on flying has been one of friendly fatalism tempered with a mixture of optimism, curiosity and a dash of professional appraisal of circumstances.

V.I.P. flying had to be regarded, in all sanity, as safe flying. V.I.P. crews and planes were the embodiment of reliability. Sister Ann and her crew fitted the pattern cheeringly. Thus, anyway, my thoughts were running early the next morning as we were about to take off from Shanghai for Tokyo. I needed a crumb of reassurance. Early-morning departures, as any experienced traveler knows, find us all somewhat below par, and I was depressed.

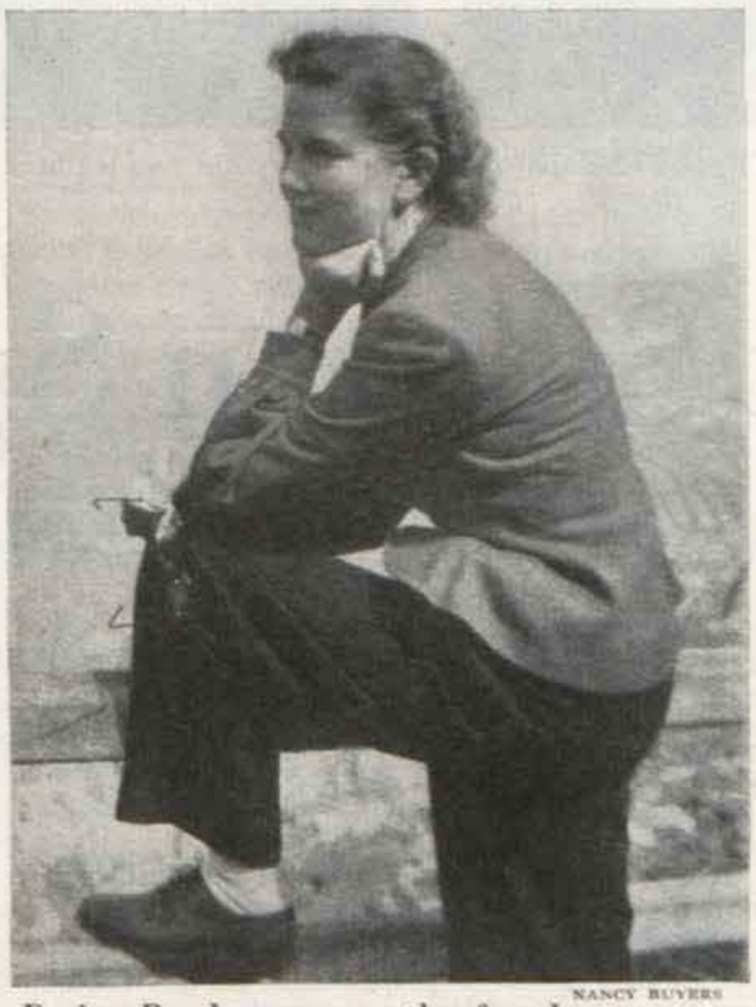
My depression was due to a foreboding that I was about to carry into mortal danger all who flew with me, and to the knowledge that I could not, for want of justification—or of moral courage—bid passengers other than myself remain behind. Here seemed a destiny which had to be risked, a destiny which could be averted not by delay, but only by a change which I could not force myself to make—a change of passengers.

Had the weather report been unsatisfactory, could I not then have made some excuse for lightening the load? But the report was reasonably satisfactory, and it was bootless to plead a need for carrying extra fuel. Sister Ann had all the gasoline she could take; her extra, long-range tank was full. Six

A POST DOUBLE-LENGTH ARTICLE COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

At Singapore, just before departure of the doomed flight: Air Vice-Marshal J. D. Hardman, Air Marshal Sir Victor Goddard, Air Marshal Sir George Pirie and "Dak" Campbell, captain of the Sister Ann.

At Takarchi, after the crash: Flt. Lt. Anderson, the Sister Ann's navigator, is at left in this snapshot.



NANCY BUYERS

Dorita Breakspear was the female passenger who was predicted to be on board the Sister Ann.

MAP BY WILLIAM H. CAMPBELL

On the last leg of her flight the Sister Ann was headed for Tokyo, but crashed on Sado Island.

passengers was not too many. The time for decision had slipped past, and I knew it.

How often before had I questioned my right to commit lives to hazard in the air? I questioned it now, and never before had I questioned it with such misgiving, never with a less supportable reason. As an air marshal, how could I possibly say that I'd been warned supernaturally? Or by extrasensory perception, if that is the more fitting expression?

Actually, I had been warned, and through someone else's supernatural—or E.S.P.—connections. Rather dramatically too. It had happened at a cocktail party given in my honor the previous evening in Shanghai. The room was loosely thronged, and there was an easy Anglo-American clatter of conversation. I was talking with Sally Dean and her future husband, my old friend Brig. Gen. John McConnell, USAF, when I heard two Englishmen behind me begin a conversation which caught my attention at once. It ran like this:

"I'm very glad this party is really on tonight!"

"Of course, old boy, but why shouldn't it be?"

"Well, wasn't it laid on to welcome Air Marshal Goddard?"

"It certainly was. What of it?"

"We haven't met him. We never shall. He's dead!"

"Dead? You don't mean that! He couldn't be. Ogden would have put off the party."

"Yes, that's what I thought. But he is dead. Died last night in a crash—hell of a crash. Yes, he was killed—no doubt about that. Not a hope. Bad show!"

The man spoke with a disconcerting tone of authority. *Is he crazy*, I wondered, *or am I hearing things?* I turned my body slowly half left. Before I had time to take in the man's appearance, he had glanced quickly at my face and started as though I had hit him.

"My God!" he exclaimed with a gasp. "I'm terribly sorry! I mean I'm terribly glad—that is—how extraordinary and how appalling! I do apologize!"

He was a British naval officer, a commander. I smiled and said, "I may be a bit moribund, commander, but I'm not quite dead yet. What made you think I was?" **(Continued on Page 102)**

"Swell trip, thanks!

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THE NIGHT MY NUMBER CAME UP

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He hesitated. And then he spoke, quite definitely, "I dreamt it. I had a dream! Last night . . . or was it this afternoon? I could have sworn it was true. It seemed so true. How frightful!"

"What else did you dream about?" I asked—I had more than the obvious reason for being interested. "Where did it happen?"

"It was on a rocky, shingly shore, in the evening, in storm. It was awful. Snowstorm. Don't know whether it was China or Japan. You'd been over the mountains in cloud. Up a long time. . . . I watched it all happen."

"What sort of plane was I in?"

"Oh, an ordinary sort of transport passenger plane. Might have been a Dakota." (Sister Ann was a Dakota, but the congruence here was not especially striking. "Dakota" was the British name for USAAF's C-47, military version of the familiar commercial ship DC-3, and scads of them had been Lend-Leased.)

"What about the crew in your dream—all killed too?"

"It was a shocking awful crash," he replied tangentially. "If I were you, I'd stay on the ground for a couple of days."

"Why a couple of days?" I asked.

"Well," said the commander, "this will seem rather stupid to you. But I've just been reading a book by a philosopher bloke called Dunne, An Experiment With Time. He had discovered that some dreams, or some bits of dreams, come true. But if they are going to come true, they come true within the next two days. He builds up rather an interesting philosophy out of it all. Guess I've got a bit dream-conscious. Still, if I were you ——"

Inclined to argue with the commander, I said, "Dunne makes out, doesn't he, that when the subconscious mind is released from the duty of serving the conscious mind—because the conscious mind has gone off duty, too; gone to sleep—then the subconscious can dash off into space and time and have a wonderful spree making sequence pictures to taunt the sleeping conscious mind's eye, mixing up past and future events? And isn't it his point that this is what we call dreaming?"

"Yes, that's the idea. You must have read the book."

"I have," I said, "and it didn't say that two days is the limit for coming true. What it did say was that Dunne found that, once he had begun to get dream-conscious, he had such a collection of dreams to record, and had to watch so closely for bits of them coming true, that if something didn't happen within two days he would discard his dream records more than two days old and concentrate on newer dreams."

"All the same," said the commander, "if I were you, I'd stay on the ground for a couple of days."

"That wouldn't do at all for me, commander. I'm in the air force, and I'm going to Tokyo tomorrow!"

I was about to leave the commander when I decided to test him further on facts. He had disturbed me. What he had said about geography and terrain seemed to fit too well.

"By the way," I said, "did your dream show you what sort of people I was traveling with?"

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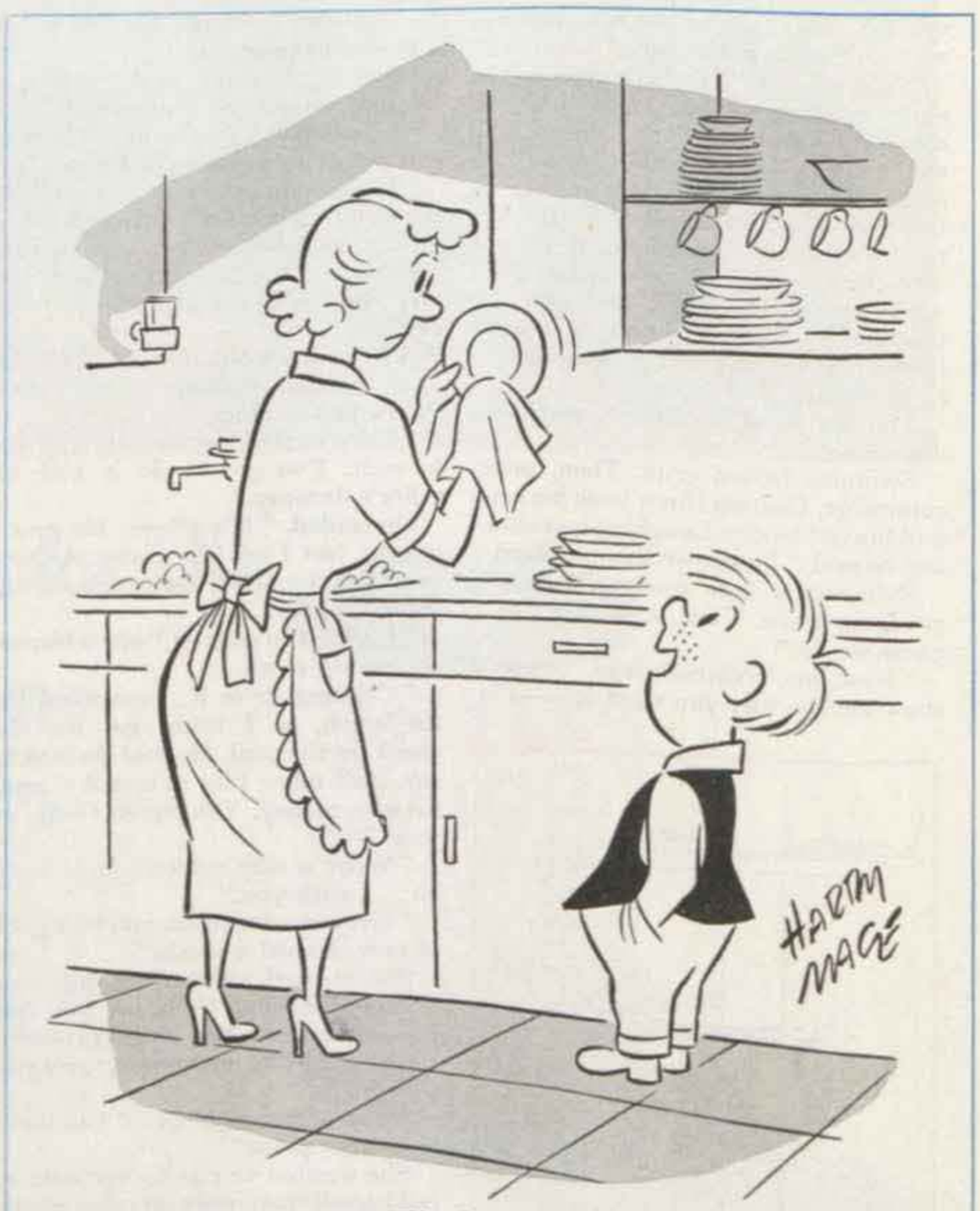

"I'm hungry!"

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

(Continued from Page 102)

"Yes," he said, a little slowly. "An ordinary service crew—air-force people, anyway."

"Anybody else?" (I wanted to know if he had "seen" the Hon. Seymour Berry, whom I'd picked up in Hong Kong at Lord Louis' radioed request and had brought to Shanghai. Berry was representing his father, Lord Camrose, of the Daily Telegraph; he intended stopping off in Shanghai for a few days.)

"Yes, three civilians," he added, quite definitely. "Two men and a woman. All English."

"Thanks very much. That's quite a relief. Not a Dunne dream! I'm carrying no one but a service crew. I did have one civilian aboard, but he's not going on. So let's have a drink! And, by the way, I don't know your name."

"Oh, I'm Dewing, from the Crécy. I'm in harbor here. I was asked to come along to meet you. Pretty queer sort of introduction! Can't help wishing that the weather may turn sour and keep you here a bit."

We chatted awhile and moved apart. I never saw him again. Next day the Crécy sailed for the Mediterranean.

A few minutes later Seymour Berry drifted up alongside me and said, "I want to get on to Tokyo and home, and have told the consul general that I shall try and cadge a lift on with you. Your pilot said it will be O.K. by him. Do you mind?"

With a feeling of shock, but without any reaction of thought, I replied, "Not at all. Plenty of room. I'm leaving at half past six in the morning."

Then I reacted internally. *Oh, blast that fairy tale. To hell with Dewing and Dunne and all that phony stuff.* But I knew in my heart that I feared this acceptance of Berry as a passenger.

That same evening, Mr. George Alwyne Ogden, the British consul general, gave a little dinner party for me. I was already happily fatigued from kindness of this sort, and doubtless I was also fatigued deeper down from years of arduous work during the war. I do not remember now who, besides Ogden and his wife, were at that dinner table. But I do clearly remember the charming atmosphere—a blending of the exquisite art of China and the good taste of a cultured European diplomat in a quietness that seemed magical in Shanghai. Ogden was questioning me about my journey and about Sister Ann, when his Chinese butler approached him with a tray bearing an envelope. It was a radio message. Excusing himself, Ogden read it.

Then he replaced it on the tray and bade the butler hand it to me, saying, "I am sorry to impose upon you, but I wonder if you can possibly take me with you tomorrow?"

I permitted force of habit to make me say, "Yes, of course," as I took the message and read it. It was from the Foreign Office, London, copy to the British representative in Tokyo—or perhaps the other way round—and was addressed to consul general, Shanghai. It referred to a preceding exchange of messages, concluded that it was imperative that the consul general should personally visit the British high commissioner in Tokyo as soon as possible, and ended, "Trust you can secure an air passage without delay."

"I'm afraid this is urgent," said Ogden, "but it's a damned nuisance! It *would* happen when I am having my first cold in the head since before the war! Besides, I've got plenty on my hands here. What time were you going to leave?"

While he spoke, I reflected, *That makes two civilians. Englishmen. I don't like that. But there's no woman, and no chance of one now. Anyway, what bosh, worrying about a stranger's nightmare. How could I refuse?*

"Sorry," I said aloud, "did you say 'What time is take-off?' Six-thirty, local time. Hope that suits you."

And so it was arranged. Ogden spoke to his butler in Chinese. Orders to pack a bag, I supposed. We resumed our dissection of Chicken Maryland and there was general talk about the state of things in the East. I had no difficulty in concentrating upon the conversation, although I was aware of a background strain. Was it a strain of conscience? Of courage? Or of common sense?

Before the meal was over, the butler again presented himself with tray and envelope.

As Ogden took up the second envelope he said, "Another radiogram. 'Most Immediate.' This reminds me, I must send a message to Gardiner—our representative in Tokyo, you know—to say I'm coming along with you. Please excuse me." He snapped open the envelope. "Golly! That's quick! It's from Gardiner. He presumes I'm coming by air. Wants to know if ——

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Of course it's a man's world. A woman would be too sensible to want it. —MARY P. HOWLEY.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

But you'd better read it, air marshal."

I read where Ogden indicated: ". . . I have no (repeat no) reliable conference stenographer and am still very shorthanded in office. Most grateful if you could loan one for few weeks."

I handed back the message, and said, hopefully, "Don't expect you can do much about that request."

"Not easy, but possible. Are you going to be able to help me on this too?"

"In for a penny, in for a pound!" I said. "I can take him—that is, if he's a man!"

"Oh, dear, does that make a difficulty? He's bound to be a girl, I'm afraid."

I hesitated. What if I said, "No, I'll not carry a female civilian. Against regulations and all that." There'd be a discussion. Ogden would know well enough that there was no substance in my objection. I knew it too. And I could not tell him of Dewing's dream.

"Will she have time to get ready?" I asked weakly.

"You bet she will!" said Ogden. "You'll take her, then?"

"Oh, yes, of course."

"Thanks, that's very good of you. If you will excuse me a moment I'll —— Oh, Charles! Perhaps you'd kindly get someone to pass this on to Dorita Breakspear. You know the form. Could you get her here by five-forty-five tomorrow morning in my car? She can go to the airport with me. Hope to goodness her cold's no worse."

Sister Ann. You now have your complement for the death quest. Good hunting.

"Whisky?" said Ogden.

"Thanks. Then I guess we'd better make tracks for bed. We have an early start."

What a cheerless dawn that was at the Shanghai Airport! Even the sight of Miss Dorita Breakspear, a tall and fair girl about twenty years old, didn't do much to gladden my spirits.

As I shook hands with her, I said, "Flown much before?"

"Never; not once even," she replied with a pretty smile. "But I expect I shall survive."

I managed a feeble grin, but her trusting remark stabbed me, and I shivered in the chill breeze off the runways.

Consul General Ogden was ready; he'd brought Dorita along in his official car. So was the Hon. Seymour Berry, and so was young Wing Comdr. Tom Taylor. These, with myself and my young Scots aide, Flight Lt. Murray (Hamish) Allan, made up the six passengers. Then there were Squadron Leader Don Campbell, the captain and pilot; Flight Lt. T. E. J. Michael, copilot; Flight Lt. N. Anderson, navigator; Flight Lt. Ronnie Williams, radio officer, and Flight Lt. John Swetman, engineer.

That made eleven. A truly fine lot, my companions in flight were, but I eyed them all nervously. On this take-off I felt no thrill of adventure.

Campbell reported ready. He didn't look particularly cheerful either. Affected by my glumness, perhaps.

"Morning, Campbell. Got a good weather forecast?"

"Not too bad, sir. We shall soon get away from this overcast, then it will be about three tenths cloud at five thousand until we get about a hundred miles from Tokyo, where there may be a good deal of high cumulus—something like a front, perhaps. But it should be clear over Tokyo, or three tenths again."

"What information was that based on?"

"Two o'clock this morning at Tokyo. Couldn't get a later synoptic."

"Feel happy about it?"

"Oh, yes. We can always come in from the sea if we can't break cloud over the land. Should be about six hours' flight."

"How are you going? Straight up the middle or round by the coast?"

"Up the middle, sir."

"Right, Campbell!" I began to turn, and then, remembering, said, "That will take us pretty well over Nagasaki and Hiroshima? I should like to have a look at those places as we go by."

"Very good, sir."

With that we took leave of those who had come to see us off and went aboard, through Sister Ann's big door at the back, through the lobby beside the little kitchen into the cabin. Here, on the starboard side, were four armchairs fixed to the deck, and on the port side there were four sleeping bunks in their daytime state, the upper two folded up to the ceiling, the lower two laid out with cushions as a settee.

The consul general chose the aftermost seat facing forward; Seymour Berry the foremost, facing aft. Dorita and I took the middle seats, she in front of me. "Hamish," who often suffered from airsickness, was glad to have one of the settees. Tom Taylor had the other.

And so we took off into the northwest, gained speed and height, and then, in a left-hand circuit, turned around that vast field where, in the great spaces between the runways, was parked line after line of American aircraft, great and small, the local residue of war aid to Chiang Kai-shek.

Sister Ann soared away over the sprawling city. The Whangpoo River, bending in silver-gray beside the Bund, held a line of warships at anchor. There among them lay H.M.S. Crécy, heed-

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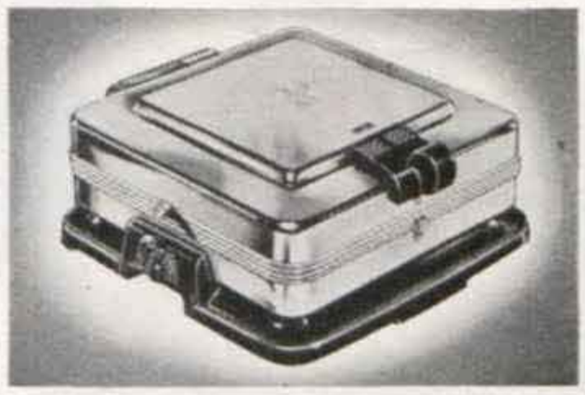

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less of our wheeling above her as we set course for Tokyo or —— Perish the thought! I wondered then how Commander Dewing had slept, and whether he had dreamed or lain awake and pondered, as had I. Fatigue gripped me. I was dog-tired.

While I mused, rather morbidly, I fear, we sailed over the sea under a clear blue sky. Breakfast came; my mood changed. Bright, scattered clouds began to drift beneath us, and green islands with rocky fringes and golden sands breasting into the sea swam peacefully by, 6000 feet below. After a while I fell asleep.

Campbell came aft and woke me. "Sorry we can't make Nagasaki and Hiroshima, sir. It will be raining hard under these clouds, and I doubt whether the base of them will be above the hills."

The cabin was brilliant with the reflected gold of the morning sun on a continuous bed of billowing cloud not more than 100 feet below.

"What height are we, Campbell?"

"Eleven thousand, sir. The front seems to have moved faster than forecast."

"What about going round by the sea instead of flying over all this stuff?"

"No need for that, sir. If it goes much higher before we get beyond it, we'll go through it."

"All right, Campbell."

That was what I said. What I wanted to say was: "Take my advice; this is going to be bad. Turn away to starboard and come down over the sea, then fly off the coast till we are in Yokohama Bay, and then fly in from there."

But I hold that passengers, whatever their rank and experience, must not try to tell the captain what he should do. So, after suggesting to Campbell that he might like to think about a sea route if he was confronted with continuous cloud, high and deep, I lay back in my chair and relapsed into sleep, while saying to myself, *Windy idiot. Dewing said this thing would be in the evening in a snowstorm, not in the morning. We shall be in Tokyo soon after lunch.* I fell asleep again.

I could not have been asleep long when the bumpiness of cloud flying awakened me. The cabin was bright; cloudy mist was swirling by. I felt drowsy, breathing rather fast. We must be high. I looked out. The starboard wing was searing through the mist; gray fragments seemed to be breaking away from the leading edge, which I could not quite see—fragments flying away aft. Ice! There was unusual vibration. Could that be the propellers icing up? I watched, fascinated, wondering if the others in the cabin knew about ice, and, if so, whether they knew that we were icing up rather unpleasantly.

Dorita and Seymour seemed to be asleep. Hamish was lying full length on the settee, looking greenish, eyes shut, holding a paper bag. Consul General Ogden was looking at his book. He seemed distressed with his breathing. Said it was his rotten cold in the head. The cabin had become icy cold inside—evidently too high for the heating system to do much good. I gave Ogden an extra rug.

Soon the light grew brighter again. No more ice fragments flying by. The engines resumed a smooth, harmonious roar. Vibration ceased. Upwards, the cloud mist was brilliant light blue. In a flash we were out above it, soaring blithely in cascading, blinding sunlight. And there, clinging to the shining metal of the great, flexing wings, I could see a thin layer of ice with its ragged edge.

Campbell, having handed over to Michael, his copilot, came aft and spoke to me in a low voice, "We shall have to keep above it. If we go through we shall get heavily iced again."

"Yes," I said. "I noticed that. We must be pretty high now."

"Seventeen thousand."

"No oxygen aboard?"

"No. All these past years in India, Ceylon, Burma and the East Indies we have hardly been above six or seven thousand."

"Well, I guess we shall not come to any harm at seventeen thousand, but Mr. Ogden here has a cold, and is feeling the height badly."

"We ought to be finished with this stuff before long. What about some lunch, sir?" (Anything to get our minds off his particular worry.)

I had a cheerful chat with Ogden, Seymour Berry and Dorita. We all agreed that it would be a good thing to see what sandwiches and coffee could

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"I can't say much for your family or your prospects—
but I certainly do admire your blind courage."

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

(Continued from Page 106)

do for us—all of us except poor Hamish, who said, with regretful resignation and a slight Scottish burr, "This is no one o' my lunching days." But when lunch came, only Seymour Berry and I could take much active interest in it.

This drowsiness! I could keep awake, tired though I was after the torment of last night, but I found it difficult to think forcefully. Perhaps that was because I doubted the value of forceful thinking. I was wondering vaguely what it would be like to die violently. Should I become an interested, disembodied observer of the wreck of the Sister Ann on some rocky shore? And how would these deeply wronged and very rudely surprised victims reproach me in their disembodied state? Would they understand why I had given them no warning—given them no chance of escape?

Campbell came aft again. "We shall have to have another shot at going through it, sir. The cloud tops are still higher, and we are now at about eighteen thousand. I expect it will be a bit bumpy."

I told Ogden and the others, and asked them to do up their seat belts. I offered Hamish my seat. He preferred to lie and hang on to his bunk.

In we went—into that swirling, darkening mist—and down.

Campbell throttled back a bit. Then I heard the "Crack! Thud!" of broken ice against the cabin—ice chunks flung off the propeller blades. And I saw the ice breaking away from the leading edge. It grew darker. What time could it be, I wondered. My watch said 11:20. That would be only 12:20 Tokyo time. And that wasn't evening! But how long before the ice would cease to snap away, and, instead, suddenly build up a great solid shroud? Stalling at height in ice has a bad history.

But there was no snow. Surely Dewing had said there would be snow?

The bumping, jerking and swaying accelerations of Sister Ann as she plowed through those tumultuous clouds kept her passengers anxiously preoccupied with their own internal states, and, I guess, with their concealed fears.

In rough cumulus cloud, at speed, it seems that wings and body must part company. Body and wings? The eerie crescendos and cadences of sound, the roar and whine of the engines and the whistle and shriek of the slip stream made it seem as though body and soul must part company, and that flying had passed out of the pilot's control.

But, once again, darkness and the tumult abated. Once again those enveloping gray mists were suddenly flung aside. As if hurtling over a chasm, Sister Ann flashed into the dazzling blue among the towering, billowing cloud tops.

Ear pressures and quickened breathing told us we had climbed again to heights where oxygen is rare. It was a relief—a vain relief—to be in tranquil air under that blue and brilliant dome of heaven. The beauty of that apparently resting ocean of snow-white cloud took us out of our troubles.

Momentarily I was aware of immortality and the glory of God. That thought, that certainty, was with me then. Surely that is always the real estate of things, could but we grasp that fact, even though our mortality lies beneath us in obscurity, in turbulence and gloom.

Mortality. That was the unwelcome idea confronting me at that time, and for the next few hours to come. I tried to decide what was the proper posture for a man in that situation to assume.

It did not seem that introspection and prolonged meditation or supplication were, for me at that time, the most prudent activities. Rest or active thought for right action seemed more justifiable.

I chose to try to think constructively. I knew that Campbell would come aft from the controls and report before he essayed another and probably final plunge through that ice-infested ferment of cloud below. I had some questions I wanted to ask him. Indeed, were it not so ingrained in me to avoid thrusting my opinions upon the pilot when I am only a passenger, I should have wished to be sharing with him the grievous and increasing responsibility and stress he had to carry.

I knew, perhaps better than he did, that prolonged shortage of oxygen makes for slow reactions, drowsy wishful thinking, denial that one is not really in full possession of one's faculties. I knew that he might feel the need

(Continued on Page 111)

"And then the beautiful princess married the poor commoner . . . a year later you were born!"

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

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(Continued from Page 109)

for consultation, but that he would, at the same time, strive to maintain the confidence of passengers and crew, and that he would show no emotion except compassion for our discomfort.

After what seemed like an hour, he came. A little gray in the face perhaps from fatigue and anxiety, but carrying a smile and an air—how forced, I could not say—of quiet confidence and unconcern.

"Still too much icing to go on through," he said. "But I think we should soon reach a warmer part of the front. So we will try again later."

"Are you in radio touch with Tokyo or Shanghai?"

"We can hear Tokyo talking, but they do not reply to our messages; don't seem to know our call sign."

"When did you last get a Direction Finder fix, Campbell?"

"We have not had a bearing since we first went into the clouds. But I hope, on Dead Reckoning, to break cloud over the sea about fifty miles east of Yokohama. Meanwhile I think it best to orbit here and hope for better luck soon."

I refrained from asking the obvious question about the accuracy of his D.R. position. How could he know his drift without either bearings, radio, astronomical-position line or sight of the ground? Nor did I ask how much longer his fuel would last. If Campbell wanted to tell me, he would. But I was anxious lest he should not realize the precarious state of the consul general and Dorita. They were sick people—much sicker than they cared to let me see.

I do not mean just airsick. They were ill and faint from lack of oxygen. I feared for their lives. Dewing had said nothing about collapse in the air. I had been anxious for them both, and for Berry too. Berry was not enjoying anything but seemed to be unperturbed. He was young, experienced in battle, a soldier in mind and heart, though at this time, in fact, a civilian journalist surveying the Orient.

But Dorita was not an aviator. And she, like Ogden, evidently had a shocking cold in the head. They were not tested to the medico-physical standards for this kind of thing. Small ailments can, at altitude, become grave illnesses. But, answering my inquiries, both Ogden and Dorita professed to be feeling "not too bad, thank you." In my judgment, however, they could hardly carry on much longer at that height. Mercifully, Dorita did not look capable of hysterics. But collapse might be sudden and unseen.

Campbell was still beside me.

"What was the altimeter reading when you came aft?" I asked.

"Seventeen thousand, two hundred."

"D'you think that the sea-level barometer here is as much as an inch lower than it was this morning at Shanghai? If that's a fair guess, Campbell, it would make our actual height nearer nineteen thousand. That's above maximum ceiling for a Dakota. I suppose vertical convection could push us up to this height," I said, gasping a bit, "high enough for most people even when fully fit for flying. It may soon be too high," I said in his ear, "for the consul general and for the girl, from the looks of them. May we not be taking greater risks for them by staying up than by risking the ice? And couldn't we let down a bit steeper now, slower in forward speed, but faster downward to get to warmer layers sooner, if you see what I mean? A bit of throttling back and flap, with wheels down? You know better than I do. We must be getting light in fuel by now. That should lower the stalling speed if the ice keeps off. I only hope that Ogden's ears will stick it, poor fellow, as we pile on nineteen thousand feet of added air pressure! But you do it your own way, Campbell. I guess we shall come through all right." And I thought to myself, *Unless we hit that rocky seashore and shingle before we know how to do anything else.*

Campbell smiled and said he would give it a go. He went forward again, shutting the door separating passengers from crew.

A notice on that door about parachutes and life-saving gear caught my eye. When you don't know whether you are over land or sea, was it best, I wondered, to wear neither parachute nor Mae West until you knew which of them you really didn't want? I was checking the life-saving kit by eye when Sister Ann began to lose height for her final struggle within that meretriciously bright-faced sea; that inwardly dark turbulence of icy, misty treachery.

Then, as we skimmed the curling, vaporous wisps and once more there started that plunging, jolting, heaving—that was to continue unabated for yet another four long hours—I checked the expressions on the faces of my fellow passengers.

It's true that "hope springs eternal in the human breast." And even I was hopeful, despite what I feared. My companions' expressions were pained, resigned, but placidly determined—their hands tensing on the arms of their chairs as we went in, as the brilliance of heaven began to fade and as the crescendos and whining cadences of engine roar told me that Campbell was well into his letdown.

I could see by their nose blowing, cheek puffing, swallowing, chewing and jiggling finger at ear, that Ogden and Dorita were in great pressure pain. They looked at me imploringly, but asked nothing. I tried to encourage them by saying repeatedly, at intervals, things like, "Not much longer now!" "Stick it; the worst is over!" "Yawn!" "Isn't it hell?" "Pinch your nose and blow!"

A sudden diminuendo and deadening of noise. That shock of throttling back. In cloud it gives me the same heart tremor as does sudden engine failure. No gas? But an instant later I knew better—Campbell was going to try the steep-descent-at-slow-speed technique. With a faint hydraulic wheeze, down came the flaps. I hoped Campbell would watch that air speed and not get her too slow. I watched the leading edge, for ice. And no ice formed—not until nearly half an hour later, when we had bumped our way down some eighteen thousand feet of that swirling crazy staircase into the surging gloom of what was, in fact, the wet, cold base of a towering cumulo-nimbus.

How dark it grew. Then I heard that vicious crack-crack on the metal flanks of Sister Ann. Ice. Breaking away, thank God. Engine vibration. Ice on the props again. The shock on strained nerves of another throttling back, then a roaring up of revs and a volley of cracks and thuds on the flanks. Campbell and Jack Frost in a battle of wits. More shuddering vibration from ice-clad blades. Sticking, is it? *Oh, God,* I breathed within myself, *let it not be more than I that dies. To die? How strange. . . .*

Flash. . . . We're out of it!

But we were nearly into something else! Those black-white yellow lumps heaving there were waves of the sea. *Oh, snow. It's snowing hard. What's the time? Three-thirty.*

Snow. Might have guessed it would be sea and snow. That was what Dewing had said it would be. But where's the land? Where's Dewing's "rocky, shingly shore"? I wondered.

And at that moment the snow ceased, and, the cloud ceiling having lifted with our passing through the storm, we climbed to about 500 feet. Here, for the moment, we had a clear half circle of horizon, black on gray, bounding without limiting that seemingly endless black and white, wind-swept sea. No land. Not a thing in sight save storms, white horses and gray-black skies.

But there we were. Not wrecked on a mountainside, nor yet on a rocky beach. Campbell and Anderson, his navigator, between them should have a good idea which particular sea this might be.

After once circling round to starboard, through 360 degrees, Sister Ann steadied on a course that seemed to me to be about southwest—that is, if the wind was northerly, which I guessed it to be. My hunch, which I kept to myself, was that the nearest land would be the northwest coast of Japan, Honshu, lying fifty miles or so to the east.

I don't believe in that elementary law of chance which says that, if you don't know where you are, it is 359 chances to 1 against your choosing the right degree angle for your course. That's the mathematical chance. The human chance is that, if you are frightened, you'll guess anything; and, since it's even money on your choosing any degree angle for your course, your right degree for steering has an even chance with all the other 359. And if you just plain don't know and can't find out, but yet you want to know and are not afraid of getting the wrong answer and not too proud to think, "I shall hear the right course in a minute," then you will hear it. Often proved that for myself. Often have I boobed on it, too, through thinking it a phony thing to do, invoking God to correct your own silly errors. Still, that's how it has been with me several times in years gone by.

But when Campbell said southeast was the course, I did not say, "Oh, but a little bird tells me it should be east."

Why not? Same reason as prevented me from canceling the whole flight when I heard Dewing's story. One shouldn't mess about, I thought, with the supernatural in other people's behalf. Do what you like for your own self. When it comes to others, make judgment on rational bases and under recognized rules. So I sat back and watched us head for a great storm sweeping its long mare's-tails of black snow from black cloud to black-green sea; sweeping in from the southwest horizon.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

LAUNDRESS

By Dorothy Cruikshank Caffrey

Yesterday was washday;
My! the rain was busy
Cleaning up the grass and flowers
And laundering the sky.
Now the world is spotless;
All her work is finished,
Except for several little clouds
Hanging up to dry.

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I wondered whether an intervention by me in favor of my own hunch would be in line with destiny or would counter destiny and lead to safety. As I mused on this point, the remainder of the horizon faded, snow swirls enveloped us, and down we went to the crested waves, speeding over the blown spume and heaving rack, swaying, dipping and soaring as would an albatross. How dark that sea, save where the white foam was torn out of wave crest and strewn in streaks about its troughs and breasts. *Darker, darker. It's black ahead. Cliff. Oh, my stomach. Up. Up.*

Lumpy blackness swerved below in shattered crags of snow-flecked cliff, with broken waves lashing white anger at its feet. And we were in the clouds again, climbing, then turning away, down. Out we plunged, from an Immelmann turn, scudding away south.

So that was where Japan had got to. Hiding in a storm. But could that be Japan? Often is land found in storm while ocean spaces are clear. Evidently Campbell had guessed right. But what a landfall. "Cliff-crash" was so nearly a better name for that particular landfall. How he pulled her up and over. But it can't have been too bad; I didn't black out. Not more than 3-G, I guess. Now we must turn back and probe into that coast again, and turn, and follow it, at least until we got a fix. Those were my thoughts.

And so we did.

Campbell swung Sister Ann back through northeast, and then steered away to east-nor'-east to make, he hoped, a sideways edging in to those inhospitable yet welcome cliffs. Slowly, out of the darkening snow swirls, the cliffs loomed out to meet us, then sidled away astern into the snow again as more cliffs and rocky water tumult sped heaving into view from the port bow.

And then Dewing's words came flooding back again: "It was on a rocky, shingly shore, in the evening, in storm. . . . Snowstorm. . . . I watched it all happen. . . . Shocking awful crash."

Cliffs, continuous cliffs, cut off at the foot in a vicious spray of lashing, driven waves; cut off at the head by low clouds not 200 feet from the sea; partially obscured by myriad snowflakes, gray in the gray-white air. The turbulence of the air in which we were flying was such that none of us could easily bear the strain of it, and it seemed that Sister Ann might not withstand it for long. After a while I gripped my way forward to save the captain thinking that he should, somehow, come to me and report again. Navigator Anderson was standing beside Campbell as he wrestled with wallowing Sister Ann at the portside pilot's controls. Anderson was gripping a stanchion with one hand and a map of the northern part of Honshu in the other.

"I think we're about here, sir," Anderson said with cheerful confidence, pointing at Akita, "on the west coast, a little south of latitude forty. We are following the coast south till we get a fix."

Campbell caught my eye and grinned.

"Not too good below all this muck," I shouted, "but better than being up top waiting to become a ball of ice! Jolly good show getting her through, Campbell!"

Campbell grinned again and continued his busy, determined, two-handed jockeying with control column, peering through the open clear-vision panel and the driven snow, at the sea, at cliff and cloud, fighting the racketing, swirling bumps.

No good raising questions of time, space and fuel then. I went aft again.

My aide was prostrate and pale on the settee, handkerchief on face. One hand stuck out each side, gripping. He was ill.

"Hang on, Hamish," I said. "Can't be long now before we get somewhere."

I lifted the handkerchief; he smiled an agonized smile. His forehead was hot. The other passengers, strapped in, were joggling in their seats, holding on with both hands.

"Going down the coast!" I shouted to make my voice heard over the din. "Not much longer of this, I hope!"

I had had some pretty severe buffetings and bucketings about in the past. Always thought New Zealand was the worst for that, until in one awful cloud descent near Bombay, during the monsoon, the Hudson (A-28) I was flying had twice been flung upside down like a leaf in the wind. But this cliff-frustrated gale produced the fiercest bucking, jerking and wrenching I had ever known.

Ogden and Dorita were, I guessed, in worse plight than my poor aide because of the violent pain in the catarrh-bound ear tubes. None of us knew it at the time, but this experience was to continue, almost without easing, for more than an hour longer.

After a while there came a cessation of the wrenching, for the cliff had ended abruptly. Endeavoring to follow it, we entered an open haven, a bay, where the clouds lifted a little and we could see.

There, beside a rocky, shingly shore, where the snow had not yet settled, lay a snow-covered fishing village, mute and lifeless in black and white, drifting beside us in the snow, but backed, as we found, by cloud-covered steeps offering no landing place.

It was a curved shore between headlands. The beach was less than 300 yards of shelving shingle interspersed with rocks. It was bounded at each end by black crags and masses of broken rock, and, beyond, by another peninsula of cliff. Rocks and wreckage strewed the shallow, sandy water, where the breakers, line upon line, fanned curving into the shingle and were spent.

That haven was no haven for us. Out we swung again to follow cliffs and breakers in that shallow, horizontal chasm of driven gray snow between cloud and surging sea. My watch, now at Tokyo time, said five past four. How long to dark January. Latitude 40, was it? Dark soon after five on a day like this?

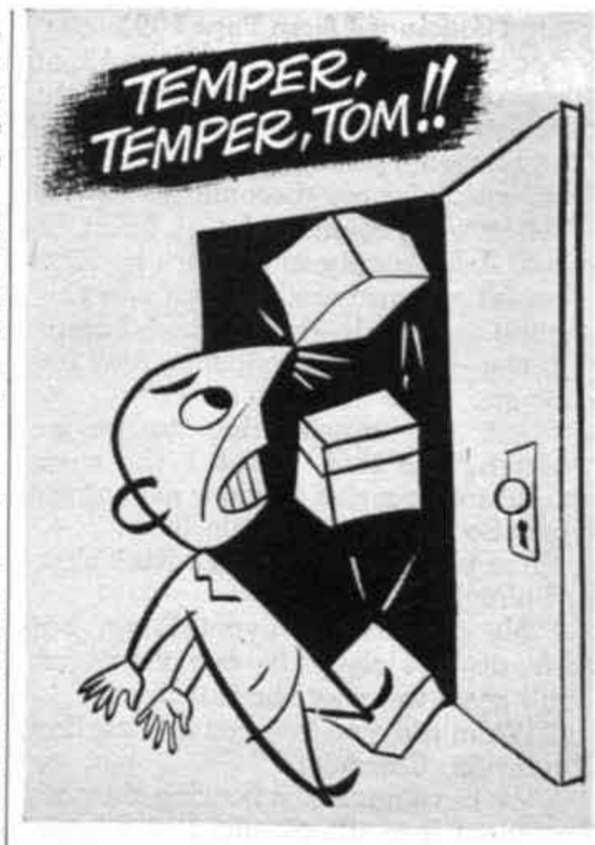
Then we lost the cliff. Fearing to butt into another headland, Campbell held away for a while, then edged in again. It grew dark, darker. Sister Ann swung away to starboard, and there, seeming from our banking turn to be itself canting, stood the cliff, hemmed in by cloud ceiling and foaming wrath of sea.

Was that for the fourth time that Campbell had fended off a black cliff rush? Tiring work. And anxious.

So it went on. On and on. We lost the cliff. Found it again. Never a break. Never even a stretch of shore on which to crash-land—not that anyone wanted to.

Dewing hadn't said that I should be at this job of dying all day. It was getting gloomier all round us. If there was a sun anywhere, it must have set by now. A quarter to five. Cliffs, cloud, sea, snow, foam on the rocks, noise, turmoil, nausea, thickness in the head, pain in the ears, fatigue. They were real.

Why worry about death at the end? But death. . . . Oh, this endless buffeting, swaying, and cadences of roar and whine.



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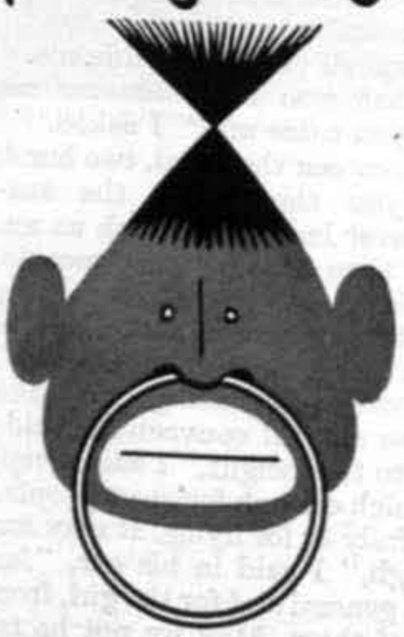

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see page 97

How can one think in this din? Those who live by the sword shall perish by the sword. Those who live by flying —— But that's not sense. The end of that sentence would not, logically, be "by crashing." And, anyway, Ogden, Dorita and Berry don't live by flying.

I will confess that I had nostalgic thoughts, some pitiful regrets, some wonderings about the nature of the life beyond, some hopes and fears for those I loved at home, and, indeed, for those now with me in Sister Ann. How many other lives were to be risked seeking our wreckage and us? For no one would see us crash and our radio could not speak for us.

It would be foolish to pretend that I didn't pray. Equally foolish to pretend that I prayed in the only way that that sort of praying seems likely, to me, to be availing—that is, with the firm faith that the evil feared will be averted.

Of the past seven years, I had spent six abroad on air-force service. My family had, perhaps, got used to regarding me as an absentee. But how would they make out? What sacrifices must be involved? Strapped in, cold, tired and longing, I looked at the black, bending, swaying steeps of cliff through the snow.

Suddenly the cliff ended again. Campbell swung a little to port. Visibility improved a bit. It seemed lighter. *Here's a bay. A village in snow by the shore. Shingle, rocks. How like —— But it is. It's the village and bay we saw an hour or more ago. We must have flown all the way around an island and got back again to this haven. This false haven.* That was it. We had.

As I thought this, we were past the headland peninsula and out at sea again. Campbell must know, I thought. But on we went. He couldn't know or he wouldn't just go on. Or perhaps he knew, now, which island it was, and knew also that in our occasional involuntary excursions out to sea we had missed a possible landing place.

I loosed myself from my seat and gripped my way forward to the compartment. Anderson was still standing, map in hand, by Campbell at the controls. At that moment the cliffs, at perilous close range, loomed darkly in the snow and burst out of invisibility on the port bow. Campbell pulled away on a steep bank and steadied again.

"Did you see that little fishing village?" I said to Anderson. He had. "Did you recognize it?"

"No, sir. Too small for this map."

"But it's the one we saw an hour ago."

"Can't be, sir. We're flying down the coast, and have been all the time."

"No, Anderson; we've been round an island. Been watching your direction indicator or your compass?"

I did not get his answer. This was no time for questioning about what was past. I guessed that Anderson had been over-conscientiously straining to make his observations of the coast agree with the mainland as shown on the map; that he'd forgotten his compass and the possibility of an island. Those boys were tired. Been up too high, too long, working too hard.

"Let me see your map," I said.

I looked at that northwest coast of Honshu and assumed that that was the coast we were somewhere near. About forty miles off the mainland there was an island something like the shape of a hand pointing. Sado, it was called on the map. It would be about 150 miles to go around it, roughly. At the northeast corner there was a dot for a village, and a tiny dent for a bay. I looked at the pilot's compass. I read it as it swung: "Sixteen.... Eighteen; that's 180; south."

"That's it, I guess, Anderson," I said. "Sado Island. And that village must be Takachi."

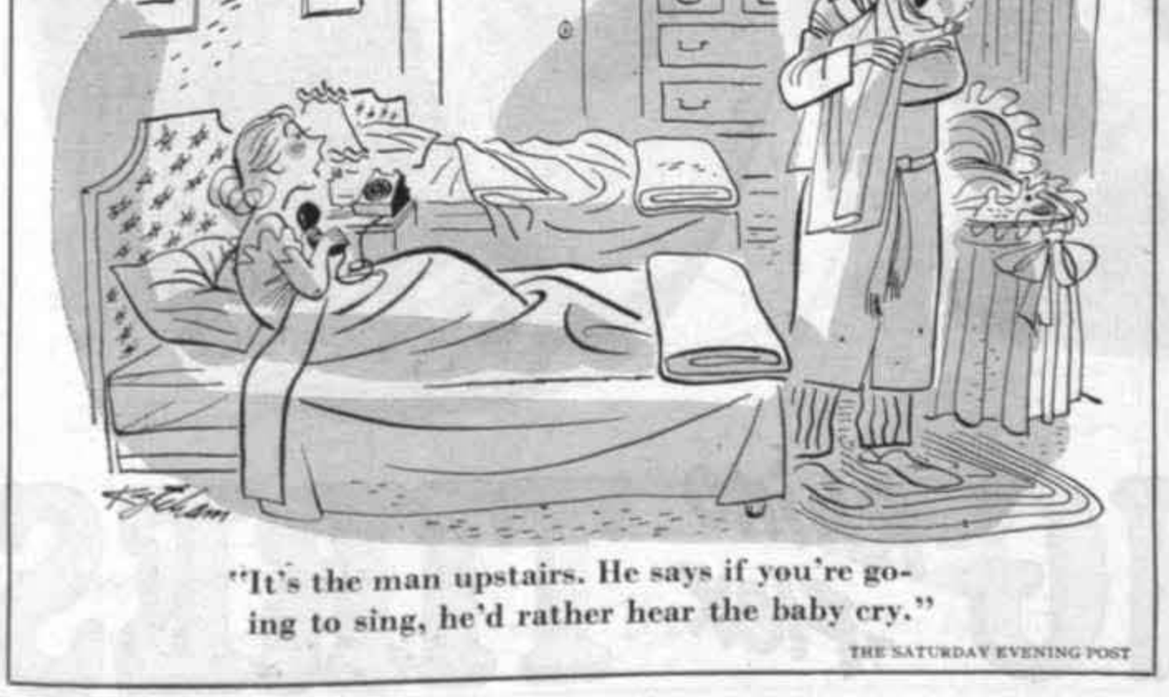
Anderson looked at the map. He nodded. Then, after some thought, he said, "The nearest airfield, according to our information, is Tokyo, right down on the other side of the mainland. That's nearly 200 miles, over the mountains and cloud in the dark. Not too good."

"And no gas," I said. "Have a talk with your skipper. My suggestion is that we feel our way back into that little bay and do some circuits there while we make a plan. I'll go and tell the others what you're doing and where we are."

I went aft. How well I remembered a similar incident flying with Admiral Nimitz from Espirito Santo on his first visit to Guadalcanal. Captain (now V. Admiral) Ralph A. Ofstie, U.S.N., and I trying to identify a little island, in storm, to save our lives. And a landing in gloomy twilight on that Jap-surrounded strip. We got away with that one.

"Well, we know where we are," I announced. "Takachi, if that conveys

(Continued on Page 115)



"It's the man upstairs. He says if you're going to sing, he'd rather hear the baby cry."

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

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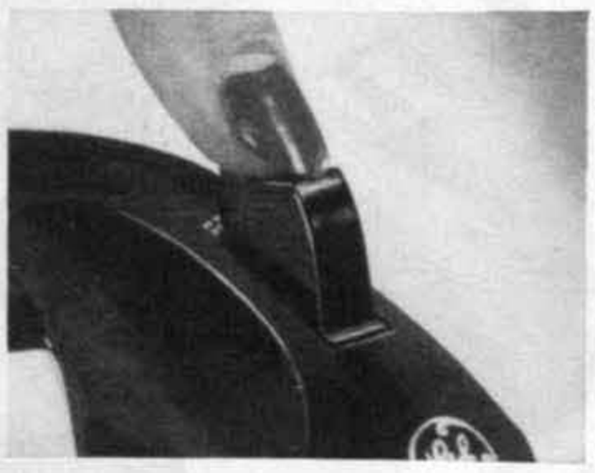

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GENERAL ELECTRIC

(Continued from Page 113)

anything to you. Now we have got to make a little plan about whether to go over to the mainland. This is an island. The mainland's not so far away. But it's getting late."

Each looked at me as a perplexed child looks at an elder. I knew, but could not say, that that rocky, desolate shingle shore beside the breakers down there was our only possible destination. Hobson's choice. Just as Dewing had said. In snow and storm, in the evening.

Anderson came aft. "The captain says he's very sorry, but we can't make Tokyo (I had long been in no doubt of that) with no de-icing boots and no radio. There's no known airfield on the northwest coast. He says he thinks, if you agree, we must land on this little beach. No question of jumping for it—clouds too low and too much wind."

I knew it. Now I had to tell the other passengers. I turned to Ogden and Berry.

"Campbell has decided that it will be best to put her down here on the beach," I said as steadily as I could, making myself heard above the racketing din of our convulsions over the bay. As I spoke, the snowing eased a little, and so did the violence of the air. "I will go and have a talk with Campbell," I added, and went forward.

Campbell looked at me, smiling and determined. "Bad show, sir, I'm afraid. Doesn't look too good. But I guess we can make it somehow. How would you land? There's less than 300 yards of beach and it's studded with rocks; so's the shallow water. I think I prefer that shelving beach to the rocky shallows, don't you?"

"Yes. Beastly uncomfortable to get drenched in that surf!"

"Would you land wheels up or down?"

"I think you'd slide faster and farther," I said, "if you kept your wheels up and landed on your belly than if you kept them down. But if you keep them down and don't crash the big rocks, we shall certainly turn over. And we can't land head to wind, curse it! What about keeping your wheels down ready to retract, and as we begin to slow up retract as quickly as you can?"

Campbell nodded, both hands strongly joggling the control column. He was sweating. He had that quality of endurance which, in the end, is what wins. I guessed that he was by now all in. His precious Sister Ann! *What will Lord Louis say?* Futile thoughts. Vain regrets.

"Campbell," I said, "you are going to stay where you are and pull off a good landing. Let me help settle things for you in the passengers' compartment."

Campbell nodded again. Turning to Anderson and the copilot, Michael, and the radio operator, Williams, he said, "I shall order the crew to crash stations. Michael and Williams, before we land, will heave the back door overboard, so that we don't get stuck inside."

I went aft. There was a good deal I could do to protect the bodies of my crew and my companions. We must get out all the blankets, I decided, cushions and everything soft—coats and so on. And the Mae Wests. They would help as shock absorbers. And Anderson must see that the captain was tightly fixed in his seat, so that he couldn't bump his head if we crashed. Everyone but the skipper should come into the cabin to keep the tail down. Besides, we'd be all the safer there, and quicker out. Those were my thoughts, and that was how we acted.

I told them all that they must fix themselves so that they could not be thrown. Those who had no seats should sit backs to the bulkhead, swathed in blankets, covered with mattresses. Those in seats must also have cushions ready for their heads, in case. All must have Mae Wests around their necks, inflated, to prevent neck jerks.

And so I saw to their dressing up for this queer play with death. Not my business as a mere passenger, of course, but excusable officiousness, perhaps, in one who is certain that he is about to die.

"Hamish, you must get off this bed and into my chair!"

"No, sir; I can't, sir," he almost groaned.

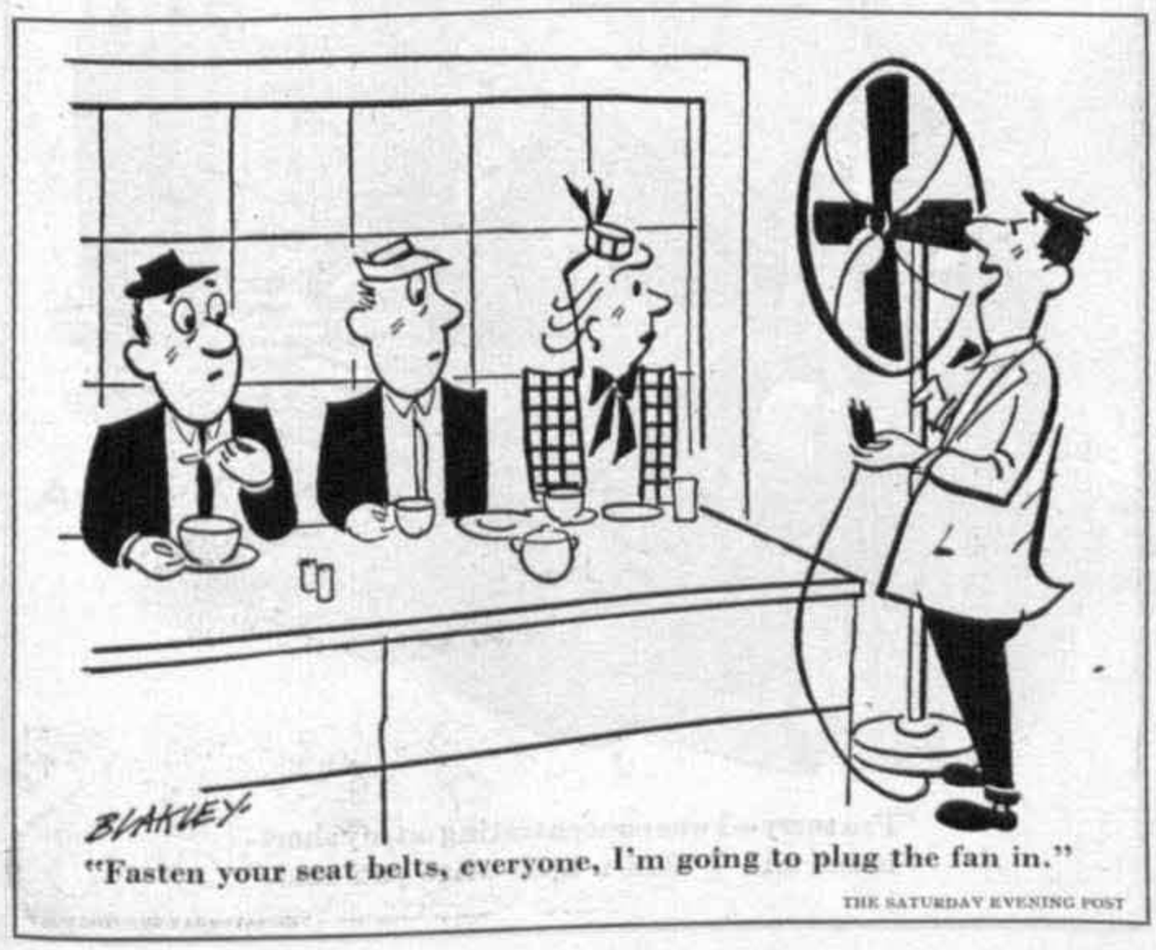
"Come on, Hamish!"

"Don't be silly!" said my hitherto-well-disciplined aide. "Unless you want the bed."

What next? But he was probably justified. Properly rebuked, I sat down and did up my belt.

"What about some padding for you?" asked Hamish, rather brusquely for him.

I began to blow up a Mae West, saying to Anderson, "Would you please go and tell the skipper we're all set for landing? Then come back."



"Fasten your seat belts, everyone, I'm going to plug the fan in."

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

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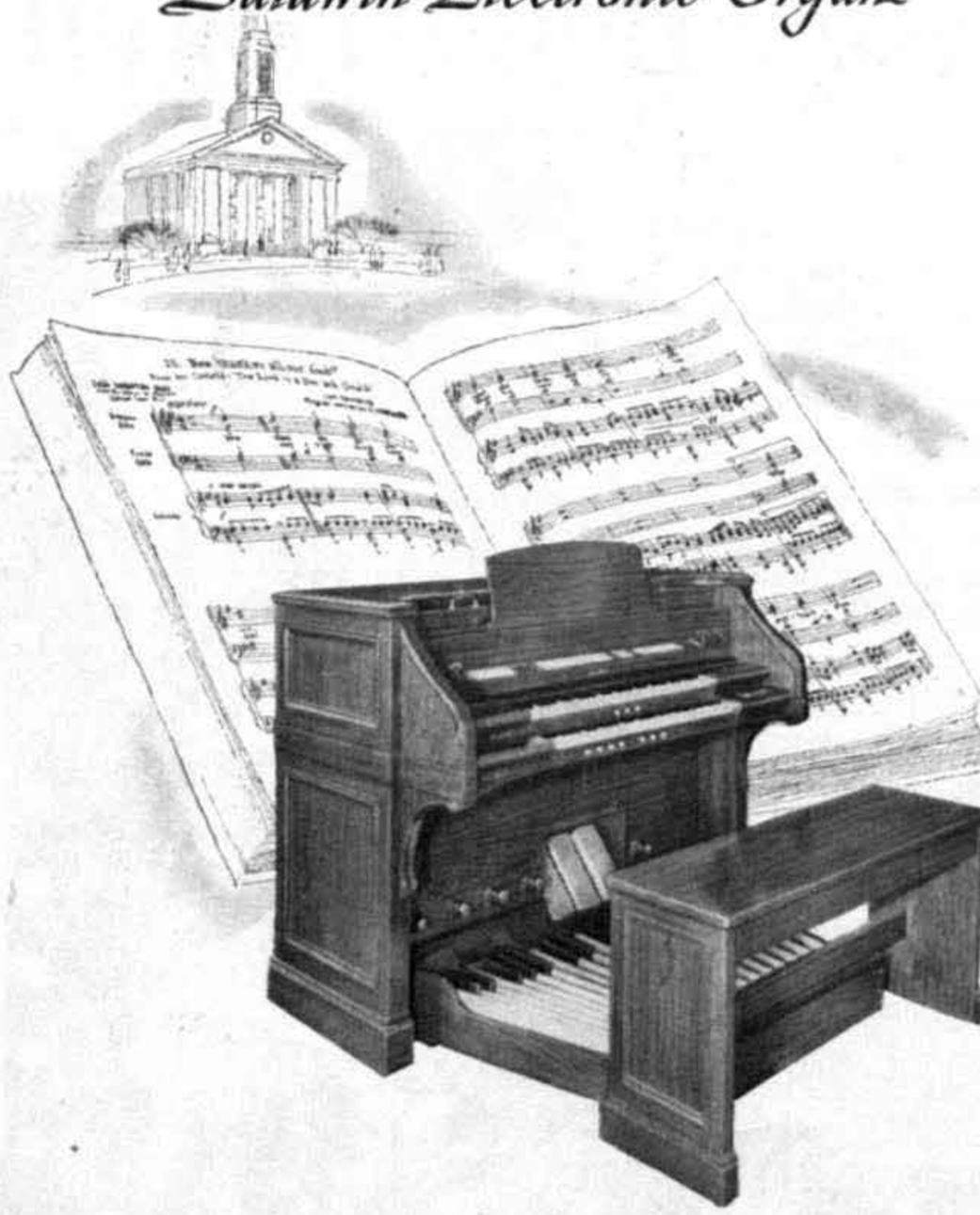

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"What about the back door?" shouted Anderson.

I'd forgotten it, after all. Michael and Williams staggered aft and turned the release levers. Off came the door with a sudden flash and roar as the full blast of snow-filled air burst into the rear of the body. Instantly there was a crash of china, cutlery and trays as the swirl of wind inside the pantry unsettled the containers there.

Anderson went forward. A moment later he returned and said, "Going down to land, sir!"

"Very good, Anderson. Thank you. Now sit down and cover up."

The picture of what was going to happen in the next few minutes had been in my mind for the past twenty-four hours. But that picture had been incomplete. I had not visualized the people involved. I had only visualized a wrecked and broken Sister Ann on a dim and rocky seashore in a snowstorm. A dismal, dreary scene, but an impersonal one. I had regarded it almost objectively, as though these good people and I were not really in it.

I recalled how, in the first World War, at East Fortune, my friend Jenkins had crashed in a Sopwith Pup and broken his skull. He remained unconscious for three weeks. When he came round he told me how, immediately after the crash, he had found himself outside the wreckage, observing himself, inert and apparently dead, in the pilot's seat; saw spectators arrive, running and breathless, at the crash; saw how they anxiously wrestled with the wreckage to get at his own body, and how their expressions of regret and anxiety distressed him. He saw the ambulance arrive and the stretcher men. He felt regard but not concern for his own body.

I wondered how I myself, my real self, would "see" all that was to be enacted on that forlorn beach when physical nature had had its way with Sister Ann and her human cargo.

Well, there lay the snow-bound village. Our disastrous arrival from the sky would bring out all the villagers, now invisible. What manner of people would they be? Would there be a doctor? Any medical aid? Surely no hospital? What should I do? *Oh, Lord, send help.*

Speaking aloud, I said informatively, "We are going to land wheels down until the plane slows up on the beach. Then Campbell will retract the wheels to prevent us from turning over. After we come to a stop, we'll get out in rotation from the rear. Don't rush it!"

Women and children first? Dorita was by no means near the rear and could hardly go first. But my mental picture showed Sister Ann upside down and in fragments, so it wouldn't matter at which end Dorita might be now. Dewing had not mentioned fire. I glanced at the first-aid box.

I could just hear, above the roar of air aft, the hiss-squeeze of the wheels going down. Two successive thuds told me they were locked down. Then down went the flaps, and Sister Ann banked close to the northern cliff, nose down for landing. The engine roar subsided. Gradually, in some degree, the frantic rush and clatter of the buffeting wind in the rear doorway subsided too.

I looked round at Ogden. He smiled in a tired, pain-racked way.

I looked at Dorita, but could hardly see her face. Her eyes were closed. Berry's face I could not see at all. Banked over as we were, I could see the curving, shelving beach with its strewn, jagged rocks and a steeple of rocks at the end. The land beside the beach lay covered with snow. But on the beach itself, recently warmed by the tide, the snow had not settled and the shingle and rocks were bare and wet. At that moment the snowing ceased.

Down we went. We were straightening out and flattening out at the same moment. Then the engine noise died out. High rocks sped blackly by to port.

Now we are for it, I thought.

With a sudden rising roar on both sides, on went the engines again, full throttle, and we jumped forward.

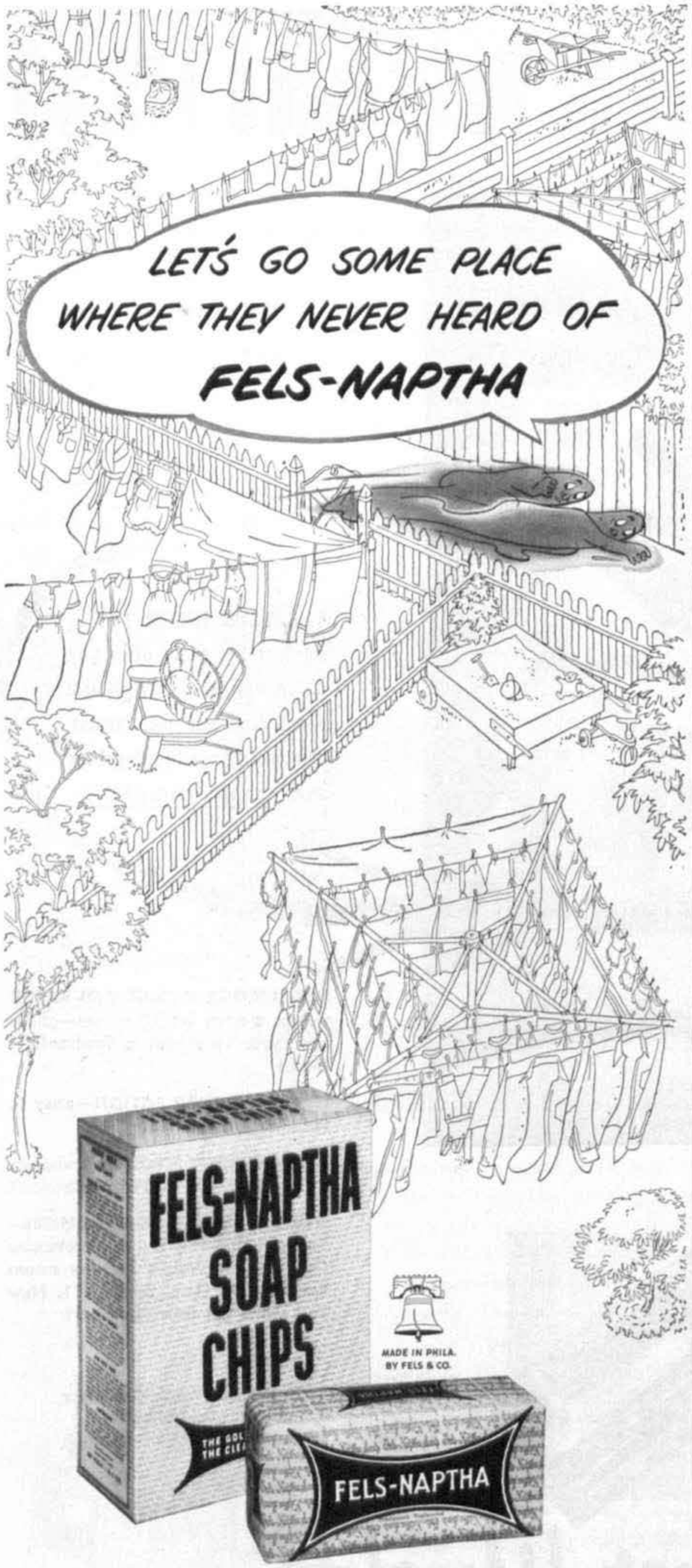
As we gathered speed the southern rocks sped by to starboard. Campbell winged over into a right-hand turn and climbed to the fringe of the clouds, a little higher now.

Anderson got up and went forward, and in a moment came aft again and

(Continued on Page 118)

"I'm sorry—I was concentrating on my shorthand and I didn't hear what you said."

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST



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(Continued from Page 116)

said, "Overshooting a bit. Going to try again."

Now we must do it again. What should I do with myself? Pray again?

As Campbell throttled back on his new approach run, I began to sing; not spontaneously, deliberately, self-consciously,

"*Good King Wenceslas looked out,*
On the Feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay round about ——"

I was putting on my best bathroom voice. I thought I could see and even hear the others singing with me.

But we never flattened out that time. A little too high again. And the cross wind on the beach was baffling.

In we flew for the third try, in the cold, dim twilight, with a rattling, roaring bashing of wind. Flaps full down. Forty-five degrees bank. Sinking. Taking-off bank. Flattening out. Off engines. Now. I must sing again.

"*For he's a jolly good fellow!*
For he's a jolly good fellow!
And so say all of us!"

That was my song for Campbell. Not very profound for a last thought. I was certainly funking that final crash. *Here it comes.*

A rippling sound began. It was a jingling. Wheels ripping swiftly over shingle. It grew harsher. The deceleration began.

"Cushions!" I shouted.

Campbell retracted. *Let the wheels back*, I prayed. But he had. Sister Ann was flopping down. Speed about forty.

Bang. . . . Bang! Cr-runch. . . . Oh, that stomach. Up! Somersaulting. Belly pull. Stop. Neck-break pain.

Hugeness hurtled by me, striking the back of my head. It was Ogden, seat and all.

Motion ceased.

Has time stopped? Is this my purgatory?

Crashing of crockery, tools and metal denied that thought. It was Sister Ann that had stopped. Stopped dead. Poised vertically on her crushed head. *There's Ogden in a heap. The wind, I hear. We're falling—falling back. Crash. On the shingle. Dead. Only Sister Ann dead. Ogden can't be dead. Not Ogden. I feel ashamed. Am I glad!*

There was a stillness. Then the splashing flop and hiss of breakers on the shingle . . . a quiet whistle of wind. But I was deaf. It seemed so quiet. I guess we were all deaf.

"My chair came off!" cried Ogden, almost apologetically.

Unstrapping, I began to laugh. At myself, I hope. We got Ogden, face downward out of his chair. Mercifully he'd fallen on a mattress, but in passing had bashed his forehead a little on the luggage rack. He was in pain.

I put him in my chair. We smiled at each other. I went to the rear doorway. No sign of fire near the port engines. I came back and looked through the starboard windows. No fire.

"There's a reception committee outside," I said. "All the village has turned out. I wonder if they know that the war's over."

I went forward to Campbell as he was coming aft. We met in the gangway and shook hands. There wasn't much for me to say then. It was nearly dark. Snowing again. And there was much to be done. As we unloaded bedding and food onto the darkening beach, the villagers stood silently, wondering. This gave one a strange feeling.

That night we sheltered in the little inn of Takachi; it was clean and sweet-smelling. As I lay on the matted floor, all having been done that could be done, I wondered whether indigestion had had anything to do with the intensity of Commander Dewing's dream. And whether he really had "seen" me, personally, in a state of total inanimation—dead. If so, Dunne must be wrong. *I must write to Dewing*, I decided, *before he forgets what he did dream.*

And I had other things for meditation. I was still concerned for Ogden. He was having a bad night, with violent head pains and aching body. But he soon recovered.

Having repolished his buttons just before we crashed, under an inward compulsion he could not resist, Hamish, my aide, had become quite his usual robust self.

After we had found the inn, young Seymour Berry became active at once, in snow and darkness. It was he who found the Japanese-French dictionary, a policeman and a telephone in the

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

JET BREAKFAST

By Loyd Rosenfield

Five minutes till the bus,
Don't go to any fuss,
Three-minute eggs in one,
Perhaps a toasted bun,
Fresh orange juice and jam,
A tiny slice of ham,
Be sure the coffee's hot,
A half cup more? Why not?

I'm glad I didn't overlook her,
My wife's an A-1 pressure cooker.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

summer-holiday home of an absent Japanese merchant; he who rang through to Nügata on the mainland. Trust a journalist to get word through to his family journal.

Don Campbell and his gallant crew I hardly saw again. They stayed with Sister Ann on the beach. Eventually they achieved the impossible. They rebuilt the beach, not once but several times. And they rebuilt Sister Ann. Campbell flew her off, with all the islanders attending. And back she went to Singapore.

And Dorita? I don't know. She was smiling when I last saw her. But that was only three days later, in Tokyo. A very brave girl.

Someday I hope to meet again those islanders of Sado, and the Christian priest who spoke French and helped us on our way.

Thinking Commander Dewing was entitled to have a full report, I wrote him a long letter from Tokyo. Months later I got a reply:

I am horrified to hear about your crash, and so long after the event. I went off to the Med. in a roundabout way the day you left, and have only just got your letter.

I remember our meeting—you bet!—and I do vaguely remember that dream. But only very vaguely. You know what dreams are! No, I can't say that I actually saw you dead, but I certainly thought the crash was a killer. Glad it wasn't. And I hope you won't blame Dunne for what didn't happen!

So much for the vagaries of fate and the vagaries of dreams—and the vagueness of human memory. For my next crash I want no prior information. Makes one too "nervy," as we say. Quite spoils the enjoyment of flying.

THE END